

Down the YouTubes

Fully Functioning Human (Almost) by Melanie Murphy (Hachette, £12.99)

1 The books coming out now are dominated by YouTube celebrities, better known in marketing speak as 'Influencers'. The names change — Melanie Murphy, Grace Victory (*No Filter*), Arden Rose (*Almost Adulthood*) and Emma Blackery (*Feelgood 101*) — but the books they churn out are remarkably similar: they're essentially a 300-page humblebrag, an inane hybrid of me-me-memoir, life guide and second-hand self-help.

2 Every story is better for a bit of redemption and so our Influencers all begin by going back to when they weren't influential and everything was shit. They were socially awkward, suffered from eating disorders, had body image issues and spent too much time online. But then, in an astonishing turnaround, they somehow regained their confidence, spent a lot of the right kind of time online and ended up being the one thing all young women should aspire to be: a YouTube Influencer with x million subscribers and an ambassadorial role with a major cosmetics company.

3 This creates a problem, however, when it comes to promoting a book: what's brought these YouTubers all their followers in the first place is that they've already laid themselves bare. They've spumed out all the confessionals they have to confess over several years of ten-minute vlogs that anyone can watch free of charge. What, then, to put in the book?

4 Melanie Murphy 15 that time-honoured space-filler, writing about writing. "For ages, I had no idea how to begin — I mean, how do you spark off a *whole book* about the absolute fool that is yourself?" she says, almost as if she concedes she has nothing to say but has been told by her agent to write a book because she has 50m followers who might buy it.

5 She then embarks on a protracted aside in which she suggests the best thing any of her readers on the search for massive vlogging empowerment could do is go and buy a different book: it was reading *The Secret*, Rhonda Byrne's frighteningly influential self-help guide, that changed Mel's life.

6 The vital thing, one that she stresses throughout, is that despite having lots of YouTube followers and her life appearing to be completely perfect, she's not perfect: "It's important that you know that now I am *literally* typing this while sitting on the toilet, having a poo," she confesses (failing to note that she is *metaphorically* squeezing one out too).

7 But it's that over-sharing that quickly gets her in trouble, when she describes the life of an Influencer: she gets money from advertisements



on YouTube, she is "lucky enough" to work with various brands and sometimes she gets paid "to simply show up somewhere and talk about my social media experiences".

- 8 You do wonder if those who are being influenced by these Influencers realise they're not just doing the blog, vlog, and now the book because sharing, connecting with people, talking about it, makes the world a better place. It's also about making these authors money and that, dear reader, is why they've bothered to write a book at all. Time to unfollow.

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